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SUBJECT: FACTIONAL TENSIONS WITHIN BDP INCREASE

11. Infighting between two factions of the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) seems to be intensifying as the party's annual congress nears. One faction is led by Vice President Mompoti Merafe and Education Minister Jacob Nkate, while the other faction is led by BDP Chairman and former Minister Daniel Kwelagobe and Minerals, Energy, and Water Minister P.H.K. Kedikilwe. President Khama is believed to be closely aligned to the Merafhe faction, but he must tread carefully as the Kwelagobe faction enjoys tremendous grassroots support. The BDP congress is scheduled for July 18-21 in the southern village of Kanye. At the party congress, the BDP's new Central Committee will be elected and the party's manifesto will be finalized ahead of Botswana's general election, which is expected to be held in October 2009.

12. Though Botswana's general election is still four months away, the BDP is holding rallies around the country to kick off the campaigns of its various candidates for office. Some of these rallies have become battlegrounds in the war of words between BDP factions. The June 6 launch of the parliamentary campaign of Vice President Mompoti Merafhe in Mahalapye was (not surprisingly) dominated by the Merafhe-Nkate faction of the BDP. President Ian Khama attended the rally and used the event to publicly criticize current BDP Chairman Daniel Kwelagobe, calling him "a self-seeking and power-hungry politician." The ostensible reason for this remark is that Daniel Kwelagobe (the current BDP Chairman and until recently a Minister in Khama's government) has refused to unilaterally pass the chairmanship of BDP to Merafhe at the up-coming party congress in Kanye. President Khama has said that a gentleman's agreement was struck in 2007 when Kwelagobe became party chair that Kwelagobe would allow Merafhe to run unopposed and succeed him as party Chairman in 2009. President Khama has announced that since Kwelagobe has refused to honor the agreement regarding succession of party leadership, Khama is instead promoting the idea of having a woman take over the leadership of the BDP. Khama has thrown his support to Tebelelo Seretse, the former chairperson of BDP women's wing, for the office of Party Chairman.

13. After Khama's remarks June 6, Daniel Kwelagobe has responded by telling the press and audiences at BDP events that he is simply abiding by the democratic constitution of the BDP and seeks to have an open and transparent election of new party Central Committee members at the congress in July. Kwelagobe says his faction of the BDP is defending intra-party democracy and promoting the party constitution. He says that his faction does not intend to topple Khama from the leadership of the party and the country. Kwelagobe's supporters have even set up a special, separate campaign fund which they provocatively named the "Fight for Democracy Fund." They claim that the BDP is denying funding to Kwelagobe and others from his faction, even when they are conducting official party business.

14. The rivalry between Khama and Kwelagobe increased in April 2009 after President Khama announced that he would not support "dual roles" for party leaders (i.e. holding leadership positions in both the party and government). President Khama told Cabinet members that they would henceforth have to choose between seeking party Central Committee positions in July and staying in cabinet. Daniel Kwelagobe announced publicly that he would choose party office over

a government position, and he was immediately dropped from the cabinet after his remarks. However, other cabinet members were allowed to remain in both government and the Central Committee of the party until BDP congress in July, at which point they were expected to remain in government and drop out of the BDP Central Committee.

15. COMMENT: The BDP seems to be divided right down the middle on President Khama's unilateral assertion that women should be given a chance to occupy senior positions on the Central Committee of the party. The Merafhe/Nkate faction, which Khama supports, have embraced the idea and support the directives that Khama issues in support of it, while the powerful Kedikilwe/ Kwelagobe faction, which enjoys the most grassroots support from BDP members, wants the constitution of the party to be followed, even if that means that men are more likely to be elected to party offices this July. There will be a similar debate in Parliament this session as the chamber takes up a proposal to add four additional "specially elected" Members of Parliament (on top of the four existing special MP slots) to increase women's representation in Parliament. Khama supporters claim the proposal will increase women's participation in politics, but the opposition parties and some within BDP point out that the eight specially elected MPs, whether male or female, will all be BDP members and likely loyal to the Merafhe/Nkate faction. While the proposed increase in special MP slots may help foster female political representation, it will also add to the BDP majority in Parliament. END COMMENT.

Nolan